

FOREIGN AFFAIRS | Flora Lewis

# Asia's Nuclear Danger

**T**he spread of nuclear weapons capacity has been slower than most experts thought likely when the nuclear nonproliferation treaty was signed in 1968. But it has spread, largely under a veil of secrecy because the treaty created a climate of international disapproval that states prefer not to flout openly.

Israel doubtless has a stock of weapons, South Africa either has some or could make them quickly, India has conducted a test and Pakistan is on the verge of acquiring the ability to produce weapons. Various pressures have prevented Iraq, South Korea, Libya, Brazil and Argentina from going ahead with their plans.

But the world is no more peaceable and stable, and the issue remains critical. Now Congress is struggling with the dilemma of what to do about Pakistan. The law cuts off aid unless there is a renewal of the waiver passed after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or Pakistan can show it has stopped working on the bomb.

Despite Islamabad's denials, evidence has piled up that it has been pushing ahead all through the six-year waiver period. Arshad Pervez, a Pakistani, will be tried in Philadelphia next month for attempting to export illegally a special steel needed to enrich uranium to weapons grade.

The waiver, which expired last week, was accepted on the argument that Pakistan was still a long way from getting the bomb six years ago, and could be induced to forgo the effort with more conventional military aid. Representative Stephen Solarz of New York says it's "now clear the policy has been a failure" and that Pakistan has shown "unbelievable arrogance."

The U.S. is embarrassed, because support for the Afghan rebels requires Pakistan's cooperation. It does not want to endanger that while the Russians are in Afghanistan. Neither does Mr. Solarz, but he thinks Pakistan will allow arms for the rebels to keep flowing for its own reasons, and might just comply with his new proposal not to enrich nuclear fuel to weapons grade.

A head-on conflict exists here between two widely backed U.S. policies: a commitment to nonproliferation and sustaining the Afghan resistance. It's another example of cross-purposes.

The Pakistani Prime Minister, Mohammed Khan Junejo, says his country doesn't seek a bomb, and "if we wanted one, we would not keep it secret." U.S. intelligence says otherwise.

Islamabad will not sign the nonproliferation treaty nor allow outside inspections unless India also does. It has suggested mutual inspections with

*Russell Baker is on vacation.*

India, as Brazil and Argentina agreed when both ousted military dictatorships at about the same time.

India flatly refuses, and will make no effort to test whether Pakistan is bluffing. Its formal argument is that as a sovereign nation it will not do what the five known nuclear powers won't do. Less formally, India points out it has been at war four times with Pakistan and once with China, a nuclear power, and needs a nuclear option.

But India is confident of its military superiority. Basically it wants to be recognized as the regional superpower, which means it will not accept equal status with Pakistan on the nuclear issue. This isn't to say the Indians aren't worried about a Pakistani bomb, which would drive them to a nuclear arms race. But they say that's America's responsibility.

## The clock ticks for India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile, they expound rhetoric, preferring to take their chances.

The Afghan problem makes the circle more vicious. The Russians evidently do want to leave, but they want to leave a compliant regime behind so as not to admit failure. Pakistan is confident the U.S. will keep aid coming until Moscow gives up.

Indian-Pakistani intransigence is more a matter of pride than security. They have a point that the superpowers have yet to reduce their arsenals significantly, as promised almost two decades ago in the treaty. The impending U.S.-Soviet pact on intermediate-range missiles is too limited to make a difference to them, and nothing has yet been done to limit tests for design of new weapons.

A new Moscow offer to allow only four nuclear tests of one kiloton each in a year could lead to an important change. By itself, it wouldn't cut arsenals but it would stop new types of weapons and it could be verified. But the U.S. wants to keep its design teams working. That spurs others.

Everybody has a stake in preventing Pakistan, and others, from adding to the list of nuclear states. Everybody has reasons not to take steps to assure nonproliferation. Everybody has reasons that others should break the gridlock. It's a matter of priorities. The nuclear clock ticks on while the nations play Alphonse and Gaston — "Please, you go first." □

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